THE MAN WHO LIVED BY HIS WITS.

AUTHOR OF "CHARLIE THORNHILL," "WHICH IS WINSER ?! Bro. Lives by his wits ! That's a very extraor-

dinary expression; and considering the amount of wits, and the many necessities of life to be got by them, requires close and careful analysis. Whether a man may be said to live by his own wits, rather than by the absence of them in other people, admits of doubt; though, to be sure, as a one-eyed man is a king among blind ones, so some credit must be given to the man who lives at all amongst his fellow-creatures. Neither is it an easy matter, after all, to come by more than one's own in such a jostling, pushing, unscrapulous world as this has become since the Reform bill of '32, a period when this much admired Constitution was supposed to have reached the very zenith of perfection, and to have been secured from any further tinkering, until the Greek Calends at least.

Perhaps that celebrated movement did really sharpen men's intellec ts; for since that time here has been a struggle, and a pace, wholly unprecedented. Bubble railways and companies, limited liabilities of unlimited assurance. mines, aqueducts, tunnels, building and drainage societies, reclamation of common land and common sewage, and hundreds of other things affoat, besides the British navy, which require a certain amount of activity and brains unknown, save in exceptional cases, when George IV was king. What have become of the idlers, the dandles of that period? Do they exist, or hide themselves in rocks and caves Be well assured they would now be trodden down and killed if they ventured to show themselves in the crowd of hungry Greeks, whose subtle and accommodating intellects pervade society west as well as east of Temple What would Brummell have looked like as the chairman of a gigantic hotel company, promising its ten per cent, to some roue noble man, or brother officer of the Tenth Hussars How would they have bartered their scrip, and apportioned the shares, and put first an eighth, and then an additional sixteenth into their pockets, as the price of their honorable names and services! I tell you, if those men had lived now, they would have had no more chance of living by their wits, than the old Exeter Tally-ho would have of beating the express train with its team.

There's so much difference between greatness and goodness, that I hardly know whether to live by one's wits is a complimentary explanation of one's career. I rather think not: and yet it ought to be. What more honorable occupation can a man find for his intelligence than that of providing bread and butter for himself? There are so many ways of doing it-not all equally proper. But as all are seized upon by somebody, it behoves the starveling to take that which comes to handand some have a talent for one thing, some for another; but I don't think much of a talent for starving in a land where everybody is helping himselt.

Men who live by their wits are not such as have a great turn for legitimate business. I do not know that implies even honesty; certainly not perseverance and respectability. It is not consistent with Exeter Hall, at first sight, though some of those gentlemen do pretty well in that way; nor drab shorts, except as far as muffins and a cold shoulder are concerned. The man who sweeps a crossing has nothing to do with it, nor our bishops, colonial or otherwise. A policeman and a parish beadle are equally removed from it, and all who have a certain or limited income from Government or Consols. The censure, if any be conveyed, includes all who have no ostensible means of livelihood at all, and many men who have half-a-dozen methods of making both ends meet. It eminently embraces the waifs and strays of the turf, the only book analogous to such a wit being a betting-book. Hangers-on of great houses are indebted for the luxuries of life to their brains; and it is a mutual compliment to believe that they are appreciated. Some men pass through life very comfortably upon the only inheritance of which their parents have been unable to denrive them: and not unfrequently finish by landing themselves in a haven which, at the outset of their career, must have been but a remote chance.

old acquaintance, Dick Whistler, was one of these. Of all the slippery dogs it was my luck to meet upon the ice this winter, Dick was the most so. There was nothing downright bad about him; but he was one of those mysterious beings that nobody knows anything about, but whom everybody knows. He had been so ever since my first acquaintance with him, and as that was in our schoolboy days, it's needless to say that it is some The way I renewed my acquaintance with him, after some little absence, was curious in itself. I was skating along, in a plain straightforward way, thinking of something, or nothing, et totus in illis, when I came suddenly in contact with a gentleman doing the spread eagle to an admiring crowd of ladies. Down he went, and as I stopped to apologize and assist the man in rising, I saw it was my old friend, Mr. Whistler, The place in which it happened was semiprivate, and I verily believe Dick knew not a soul on the spot excepting myself; notwithstanding which he had evidently skated himself into the good graces of the women, and, as a matter of popularity, was already well ahead of the oldest inhabitant. It was quite his way.

What in the world brought you here, my dear fellow?" said I, raising him from the ground, and assisting him to brush off the snow; "you are not staying in the house, are you?"

"Staying in the house !-oh, dear no-is there a house? I came down for half an hour's skating, because Herbert Beauchamp told me what good ice it was. And so it is capital." And here the speaker commenced some more evolutions, with a certain air of self-possession, and the possession of everything else within his survey.

"And what are you doing, Dick?" said I, returning to the charge. "I'm trying to do the outside edge back-

"No, no, I don't mean that; I mean how are you getting on ?"

"Oh, capitally; I'm all right. Living by my wits, since I saw you in the spring. jumped at once to a conclusion, though it proved to be the wrong one, east of Temple

"Now what should you say was a good in-vestment? Mexican Bonds or Canada Trunks? Any chance of a rise in these last P' and here I pulled up and spoke rather seriously. "I want to invest five or six hundred pounds,

and I dare say you know all about it." "No, indeed, I don't. What in the world are Canada Trunks? not hair trunks—or beeches made of buffalo hides ----" By this time, of course, I saw that his wits had not led him to the Stock Exchange. There was

I thought I might profit by it to the extent of

a sovereign or two "What should you recommond for a long shot at the Derby now? I only put on a sovereign or two; so I must have your twenty or five-and-twenty to one, you see. It's no use backing a favorite at seven or eight to one;

and I looked mysterious.
"You're quite right," replied he; and made sure I had hit upon his new occupation. "I should say Marksman, if I were you. You'll get about twenty-five to one, and be sure to have a run for your money, if the horse is all right. Besides, it's better to stand a bit of themper than a rank bad 'un." Right this time, thought I, at all events.

"And so you find it answer pretty well, do you?" inquired I, after a pause; "the associa-tions are not pleasant, that's the worst of it." "How do you mean?" said he, evidently all abroad.

"I mean the associations of the turf are not pleasant, though I dare say there's good business to be done there. I understood you to say you had been living on it lately." "I-living on the turf? No, not exactly,

my good fellow. I've been writing for the magazines; and though I do the racing article for the Pall Mall Gazette, I can hardly be said to have gone upon the turf."

"Well, certainly not," said I, considerably relieved, though somewhat surprised; for should have called his occupation anything but living on his wits, to judge by his pro-

I said that Dick Whistler was an acquaintance of long standing-so he is; and one of those men whose success in life is worth a study, if only as a curiosity. It can hardly be recommeded as a model for imitation. As a boy at school he always lived by his wits, so to speak; that is, without any of the externals of other boys, he was always on a par with them. In the matter of clothes, parents, parcels, and exercises, there seemed to be about Dick a great family insolvency. Nobody came to see him, nobody gave him nobody sent him hampers; but he managed to have friends, money, and He was most essentially goodhumored, and endowed with a tact which never made him an enemy. I think he tried to write verses, in order that he might do other boys' exercises, but poeta nascitur non fit, so he got his own done, and apologized. He had even then a talent for being among the "big fellows," and the habit has stuck to him through life.

I heard of Dick Whistler at Cambridge. don't know how he got there, or who sent him there. I never saw anybody who did know. He had no scholarship, nor fellowship, nor anything else, excepting friendship, to keep him afloat. He worked that ship, copper-bottomed A 1, pretty well. He took care to be seen always with good men; and although those were the days of rollicking, drinking, fox-hunting undergraduates, who left copes, and stoles, and chasubles, and fancy vestments to their betters, Dick Whistler left the university with a creditable testamur, and not overburdened with debt. This part of his career did him great credit, and paid in the long run remarkably well. His wits were not wool-gathering then.

When he came to London, hard work ought to have been his portion. It was all he had. So he took chambers in the Temple, as a near approach to learning. He was next thing to a clever fellow, to more clever fellows than one. An embryo chancellor was on his staircase, and the future Master of the Rolls lived opposite to him. As to Dick, he was to be seen any day on some good-looking hack, not his own, capering or soberly walking in the park, according to circumstances. He accommodated himself, too, to the club gridiron and a pint of stout, or to a French menu and Moet's very fine dry, with the same good humor. He never was without the one or the other, and he tried to look as if he didn't care which, and almost succeeded. He had grown up into rather a good-looking man, of easy, if not polished manners; and he knew his company, and how to treat it collectively and individually. Whatever he had went for pocket money and personal expenses. In these he never affected great luxury; and if he had two hundred a year, he made them do the duty of six, at the very least. He was well received by the swells, whom he knew; and he made an excellent living at this time out of his wits.

"I don't think you ever hunt, Whistler?" said my friend Tom Brampston to him, as he was strolling up St. James' street one fine October afternoon

"No, I don't, Tom," replied he: "can't afford "Money well laid out in your case, I'm sure Woodcraft would ask you down, if you did; only he doesn't know what to do with men who don't ride in the winter." So Dick meditated on these things, and thought he might as well visit Lord Woodcraft twice in the year as once. Dick did not know much about hunting, but thought he could do as other people, in which he was not far wrong. He left his dress to his tailor, and his horseflesh to the dealer, in whom he implicitly trusted. He tried a couple of good screws, and carried them into the borders of Lord Woodcraft's

hunt "What sort of quarters have you got, Whist-ler, at Noman's Land; do they do you pretty well?" inquired my lord.

"The cookery is not quite equal to the Trois Freres," said Dick. "No; I should think not. It's a pure British public; nothing more. You've got your own claret down, I suppose?'

"Well-no. I didn't intend to indulge in luxuries; but I must send up to town-"I'll tell you what you'd better do-come to

me for a month. "That's very good of you; but where shall I find stabling?" Dick had heard Woodcraft say a hundred times that he never took in dealers' horses.

"Stabling—oh! we've plenty of horses. Send these devils back to town. We shall hunt at Woodmanscroft on Tuesday, and you can come on afterwards." I need not say that Dick Whistler never missed his month afterwards, and hired no more horses.

It was only three or four days after our meeting that the frost broke. It broke very unexpectedly on Saturday afternoon, and notwithstanding its severity, the snow had kept the earth warm, and there was hunting on the Monday or Tuesday in most places. When skates were not available, leather breeches were; so Dick changed the venue from the Regent's Park or Serpentine to Woodmanscroft; for it was a principle of his not to live longer or more on club dinners, and the joint, than was absolutely necessary, though he never shrunk from the conditions of his career. I have no doubt many a man is better off upon honestly gained bread and cheese; but then he can hardly be said to be living by his wits, however laborious the occupation. The beauty of Dick's livelihood was, that there was no labor in it, and that it was as far removed from a bare existence, as clear turtle and Ponch from a bare existence, as clear turtle and Force à la romaine is from red-herrings and beer.
Under these circumstances, and having laid down a principle to act by, after due deliberation he was quite right to look for fresh to the very edge of the water, with their

but one other course he could have gone, and quarters where he knew they would be myriads of silver-frosted twigs glistening (for I thought I might profit by it to the extent of found. I record, to his shame, that he cared there had been no wind in the late frost), like nothing whatever about hunting. He had certain instincts of sport about him like the wild Indian, it is true; but they extended no further than self-preservation. Hunting a fox, of all uneatable and unpoetical things in the world, was not per se to Dick's taste. It was accompanied with some danger and much inconvenience. But then the sport was as essential to Dick's wants just now as hunting the moose or buffalo is to the wants of the wild Indian. It was his object to be at Woodmanscroft, and he kept his object in view as steadily as the Indian did his dinner. and with as little idea of being turned aside

from it. And this object now had got beyond the mere pleasures of a good dinner or society, and had licked itself into a tangible shape. Dick Whistler had determined upon marrying an neiress; an heiress of good appearance and high family, who happened at the present time to be one of Lord Woodcraft's distinnished guests.

Lady Dorothy Peacham was the only surviving daughter of the late Lord Blossomville, and had forty thousand pounds of her own. She was a good-looking woman of eight-and-thirty, at a liberal calculation; and the only wonder is, that none of the penniless Foreign Office clerks, or medieval majors of her own rank in life, had carried her off long before. However, there she was; and when Dick Whistler reached his noble host's hospitable roof, Lady Dorothy was very far

from the least important person under it. They did some hunting on Wednesday and Thursday. Dick got a fall from a not very tractable young 'un to which my lord's groom had treated him for first horse; and Lord Swansdown was nearly drowned in the river, which had overflowed its banks. Lady Dorothy did not hunt, but Cicely Prevost, the baronet's daughter, did; and engaged the attention of Major Thrustham, of the Guards, to his intense disgust, who lost the best twenty minutes of the season in shortening the lady's stirrup.

"It really looks as if the frost was gone." said his lordship, coming home on the Thursday evening in a warm fog, with a southwesterly breeze; "what do you think, Swans-

"Devilish cold," said Lord Swansdown: 'anyhow, I'm shivering.' "Oh, you've been in the water; no wonder you feel cold; but look at the sky." So they

all looked at the sky, which gave a cheerful promise of a fall on the morrow, "I wish it mayn't be snow," said Dick, than which, however, he desired nothing more earnestly. Fortune favors those who live by their wits, and in the present case she did so pre-eminently. She postponed the pleasures of at least a dozen people in one house, and thousands in other houses, to make an opportunity for a --- well --- fortunehunter, which may account for the preference. The impossibility of making love in a sixdays-a-week country is obvious. The morning absorbs an elaborate toilet, a hurried breakfast, much comforter and pea-jacket preparation, and a drive. The afternoon, if you return soon enough, baths, slippers, a dressing room fire, letters to answer, and a less elaborate but equally needful toilet. Dinner. absorption of viands, and conversation : and who was Dick Whistler that he should expect to take in Lady Dorothy Peacham, while Plantagenets of the Foreign Office, and Tudors of the Household Brigade, were there before him? He envied them their opportunities, and des-

pised their apathy.

As he lay in bed on Friday morning he was cursing the thaw, and looking at his boots with a savage animosity, when the servant appointed to look after his welfare knocked at his door, and opened his shutters.

"I should like those brown tops of mine, if you please, and mind the shaving water

"Certainly, sir; but I don't think there'll be any hunting to-day." "No hunting?" inquired Mr. Whistler, sit-ting bolt upright in bed, and running his fingers through his dishevelled locks. "No

hunting? Why not ?" "Cos it's froze hard all night, and don't eem like giving. My lord's man says he'll wait till eleven, and then beat a couple of out-lying covers, if the gentlemen would like to shoot:" and away went the mercurial valet to tell the same tale to his next master.

True enough, it was a hard frost; and as by 11 o'clock it had not begun to give, nor for twelve days after, the men who chose to stop buckled on their gaiters and thick boots, borrowing my lord's guns and my lord's loaders, and had a very pretty battue in an outlying cover-a battue almost good enough to have elicited the abuse of the sporting writers, who go in for the bob-tailed pointer and the stubble-field, to the extermination of the barndoor fowl and Leadenhall Market system, and to the glorification of "real sport, sir, and healthful exercise." How little they know of the business!

The frost continued, and some men went to shoot their own covers, some the covers of other people. Dick sent for his skates, by Lord Woodcraft's desire, and so did one or two more. The ladies were already provided, and it was quite clear that Dick's chance was better at torehlight picnics and luncheons on the lake than it had been hitherto. Still Lady Dorothy did not thaw much; and she was a lady well calculated to hold her own,

unless she meant to relinquish it voluntarily. Lady Woodcraft was a cheerful woman, and having still a detrimental or two from the Household Brigade, with Miss Cecily Prevost, left behind, was bent upon doing something to amuse her friends; so she organized a tent on the lake, with flambeau and torchlight procession, to come of when the safety of herself and her followers would be assured by the thickness of the ice. The tenants were to be there, and all the inhabitants of the neighborhood who liked to come; and there were to be cakes and ten and wine and cherry-brandy, and as much strong beer as Hodge could dispose of to his

satisfaction. And in a week's time it did come off: it was just the sort of winter for a thing of the kind to come off-what people call "old-fashioned." I hope they'll remain so, or, better still, go out altogether. Their severity is, however, relieved by an exceptional loveliness, as on the night in question, when Lady Woodcraft, and Lady Dorothy Peacham, and Cicely Prevost made their way to the lake, with Lord Woodcraft, Major Thrustham, and half-a-dozen Guardsmen and country-house idlers, the busiest of whom was Dick Whistler; it was he who arranged-what nobody else would arrange—the quadrille, the tent, the bonfire, the procession, and the chorus of school-children and choristers; and, considering he was a nobody, he really got as much attention and obedience as could be expected. Nobody knows how hard it is for a nobody to make himself somebody among the some-bodies. He would have had a charace, but

that was a plunge even beyond Dick's impudence, and he left it to somebody, who thought it too cold. However, there were the lovely trees, extending round two-thirds of the lake

there had been no wind in the late frost), like nature's fretted Gothic, against the clear sky. Here and there the fir-trees bent their branches to the ice, weighted with the undisturbed snow, and the icicles hung pendant from the picturesque old boat-house nearly in the form and size of stalactites. All was lit up by the blaze of pine-wood torches; and if the furs and bright-colored ribbons and velvets of the ladies of the house threw a warm and cheerful glow over the lake, as they glided smoothly along on their skates, the farmers' daughters and the peasant girls, with their bright red petticoats, helped the animation of the scene, as they spread themselves about in groups with their companions. The sharp night air was cut by their cheerful voices, and the business of the scene and the warmth of the welcome had obliterated the recollection that there were ten degrees of frost in the air.

"In the midst of life-" no, rather let me say, "No man, fortunately, knows how closely allied are our happiest moments to great calamity;" few even suspect it. Cows must be watered, even in a frost, and to the detriment of good ice; and for this purpose, on the further side of the lake, and in one of its most beautiful spots, overhung by the crystallized trees, it had been found necessary to break the ice for some little distance round. Many of the skaters had gone home; some were preparing for a start even now; most of those from the "big house" were trudging up the steep hill which led to the garden-gate and terrace which looked down upon the lake. Two or three of the men still remained, and with them Dick Whistler. Lady Dorothy, devoted to skating, was oblivious of Lady Wooderaft, and was prolonging her enjoyment. They were under the trees still, near, the watering place, and ignorant (especially by torchlight) of the danger at hand. A few spectators were there, watching Lady Dorothy and Mr. Whistler, who was doing his best. At once, with out a moment's notice, the ice broke, and Lady Dorothy fell in. Such an accident at night, even by torchlight, is calculated to arouse alarm. The extent of the danger was unknown, and the yokels held back from fear; the guardsmen were not much better; they came rushing to the spot, but beyond calling to Lady Dorothy, they did little for her pre-servation. Dick Whistler was more at home, and, really anxious to be of service to the lady, proceeded more systematically. It was a moment for action, not poetry.

"Take hold of that!" said Dick, extending his stick with one hand, and holding a torch with the other. "Now, then, Lady Dorothy, try to reach it!" and he leaned over still more The lady's clothes held her on the surface for a moment; but they were becoming saturated, and she exhausted. She made a violent effort however, and caught the stick. But Dick Whistler had neglected to take hold of any one for support, and the sudden jerk broke the edge of the ice on which he stood, and pulled him in. At that moment one of the farm servants caught sight of a fir-pole of considerable length, lying on the bank of the lake. Without much difficulty it was launched; and, laid across the hole, sustained their weight on either side. The Guardsmen assisted manfully: Dick supported Lady Dorothy in his arms, who had fainted: and the two were drawn from the water, just as the lady had ceased to murmur her thanks to Dick, and her prognostications of her own inevitable fate.

satisfactorily, and in a few days there was a thaw, physical and metaphysical. "Well, Whistler, there'll be hunting to morrow, and I've ordered the Duffer and Softsawder to be sent on for you. We shall have to start pretty early-breakfast at eight-fif-

From that evening matters progressed more

teen, sharp." "Thank you, my lord, I must go to-morrow morning; my time is up, and I've something to do in town that must be done."

"Oh! impossible: everything gives way to hunting after such a frost as we've had lately.

"Everything excepting the publishers. -but just then Dick, Business is business' suppose, caught sight of Lady Dorothy, and the swells were nearly all gone, and she had thawed as well as the weather, he hesitated so far as to ask whether he could get away by the night train.

"Well, you can if you choose; but it seems absurd to leave a good dinner for a cold and comfortless railway carriage. Won't the next morning do as well? At all events, the horses can go on, and you can settle about it tomorrow. If you like to stop, there's plenty of room, and lots of horses just now, as you

And somehow or other Dick Whistler did top, after a consultation with Lady Dorothy in the library; and Mr. Brevier, the publisher, went nearly out of his mind writing after those clever sketches of the aristocracy which had been promised for the Piccadill Monthly. What made it worse was that he got neither the sketches nor an answer, conduct of course unpardonable in a man who lived by his wits. In three weeks more he threw up all his engagements with the press, which has been a great comfort to many of his readers, and has announced to his friends and the public, through the Court Journal, that he is about to be married to the amiable and accomplished daughter of the late Lord Blossomville, Lady Dorothy herselfwith forty thousand pounds-need not have despaired, even at eight-and-thirty; but she knew her people best, and had become very suspicious of the motives of her order. Major Thrustham and his young friends were capital fellows, and worthy of the names they bore: but if Dick Whistler did live by his wits, at any rate he pulled her out of the water .- Tem-

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